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Chairman: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

1. **The Chairman** recalled that the current year was the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and encouraged Committee members to focus on what united them rather than on what divided them in their efforts to further strengthen human rights for all. They could take the first article of that Declaration as the guiding principle of their work.

Organization of work (A/63/250 and Corr.1; A/C.3/63/1 and A/C.3/63/2; A/C.3/63/L.1 and Add.1)

2. **The Chairman** said that the list of agenda items allocated to the Third Committee was contained in document A/C.3/63/L.1. The allocation of agenda item 58, on the report of the Human Rights Council, was still under consideration by the General Committee. He drew attention to chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/61/250), which contained guidelines with regard to the conduct of work. Diligence and discipline would be required to complete the programme of work, and he called on delegations to help improve the utilization rate factor of time allocated to the Third Committee. He highlighted the guidelines relating to the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the length of resolutions, and the need to allow sufficient time for the preparation of estimates of expenditures by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee. Delegations should respect the timetable of the programme of work as far as possible.

3. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a list of the names of the 26 special procedure mandate holders who would be presenting reports at the current session.

4. **The Chairman** said he took it that, following established practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and the chairpersons of treaty bodies or working groups, as read out by the Secretary, to present their reports to the Committee at the current session.

5. *It was so decided.*

6. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) expressed concern that many documents needed for the work of the Committee had not yet been issued and hoped that they would be made available as soon as possible. With regard to agenda item 58 on the report of the Human Rights Council, she reiterated Egypt's position, which was aligned with the position of the African Group in 2006 and 2007, that the report should be allocated to the Third Committee. It was important to engage in an interactive discussion on the report at the time of its introduction by the President of the Human Rights Council. Her delegation also urged the General Committee to take a decision on that issue promptly and avoid the delay that had occurred in the past.

7. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work as contained in document A/C.3/63/L.1 and Add.1, together with the provisions contained therein, as orally revised and with the understanding that the programme of work would be adjusted if the situation warranted.

8. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 119: Programme planning (A/63/6 (Part One), A/63/6 (Prog. 19); A/C.3/63/2)

9. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would consider the Human Rights Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2010-2011, which was contained in document A/63/6 (Prog. 19). He had appointed two facilitators to guide the consultations: Ms. Natalie Kholi of Switzerland and Mr. Lotfi Bouchaara of Morocco.

10. **Mr. Amorós Nuñez** (Cuba) said that, although his delegation had every confidence in the work of the facilitators, the past practice of the Committee had been for a member of the Bureau to conduct the negotiating process. He hoped to see that tradition continued in the future. In relation to the budgetary and programme activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the negotiations should always take into account the intergovernmental mandates on human rights, particularly those defined by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Committee should reject any proposal that was not in line with what had already been negotiated and defined by the intergovernmental human rights bodies.

11. General Assembly resolution 48/141, which had created the post of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, also offered guidance in relation to programme 19,

including the work of the Office of the High Commissioner to support human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee. It was also important to adhere to the budget and programming guidelines approved by the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. One of those guidelines was to measure and monitor the work of the Secretariat, rather than that of the Member States.

12. The right to development was a fundamental issue that had guided the Office of the High Commissioner in relation to subprogramme 1. In that context, the Organization's supporting efforts to counter racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance were important. Proper support and follow-up should be provided for the Durban Review Conference. Under that programme there should be no mixing of the work and functions of the different human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, especially in relation to the treaty bodies and the special procedures, which were mechanisms with distinct mandates and specificities. Any linking of those institutions ran the risk of "contaminating" the work of the treaty bodies with the kind of manipulation that had occurred with some special procedures.

13. The work of the treaty bodies should follow the intergovernmental guidelines established for that purpose, especially those defined by the States parties to the instruments that governed those bodies. Priority should not be given to certain procedures and mechanisms established in the sphere of civil and political rights, or those linked to specific country situations, at the expense of others concerned with economic, social and cultural rights.

14. In view of the evident enthusiasm for broadening the field presence of United Nations human rights bodies and for the expansion of the rapid response capacity of the Organization in that area, it was important to apply the principle that human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent. It was unacceptable that field activities were concerned only with developing countries and that human rights efforts did not also relate to the industrialized countries. Lastly, attention should be given to applying the principle of consent to promote the new activities in the area of human rights.

Agenda item 55: Social development

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95)

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (A/63/172)

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/63/183)

15. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the work of the Committee provided guidance to ensure that social and human rights considerations led the work of the United Nations in all areas of development. The internationally agreed development goals — together with international human rights instruments — provided a shared framework for common efforts to build better and prosperous societies for all and to put people at the centre of development. The recent high-level events relating to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Africa's development needs had reaffirmed that, in order to achieve enduring development for all, they needed to build on a shared strategy for economic and social development, articulated from those commitments.

16. The projected global economic slowdown and the food and fuel crises jeopardized the gains made towards the MDGs. It was too early to assess the full impact of those crises on global poverty, but they clearly posed serious challenges to the social development agenda. Past the midway point to the target date of 2015, despite significant progress in various areas, there were still serious challenges that affected the well-being of all people, especially the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Over a billion people still lived in poverty and hunger. Many more did not have productive work, let alone social protection. Further efforts were needed in social development and human rights in a period of

increasing economic uncertainty to foster pro-poor growth. Strong global partnerships were required to promote social development and advance social protection. As shown by the first report of the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force, additional collective efforts were needed to meet international commitments.

17. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had entered into force in May 2008, only 14 months after it was opened to signature. Forty-one member States had ratified the Convention, and 25 had ratified its Optional Protocol. The goal should be universal ratification, as the Convention covered the needs of 650 million persons with disabilities, 80 per cent of whom lived in developing countries. The first Conference of States Parties to the Convention would soon meet to elect members of the expert committee that would review compliance with the Convention and provide guidance for its implementation.

18. The report on the fifth quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/63/183) would soon be considered. Progress had been made, but there was still much to do to ensure full participation in society for persons with disabilities. He urged the Committee to act on recommendations contained in the report concerning the mainstreaming of the disability perspective in development programmes and policies. Attending the Paralympics, held in September 2008 in Beijing, he had been struck by the skill and determination shown by disabled people in their daily lives.

19. September 2008 had marked the first anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a global normative framework for the well-being and human rights of indigenous peoples. In 2008, the Declaration had been followed with the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. Such instruments created new momentum; but in order to accelerate progress, robust cooperation between Member States and the United Nations system would be needed.

20. Another pressing economic and social issue was that of ageing. The report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95) pointed to several legislative achievements, but further action would be necessary in order to address age discrimination and neglect and abuse of older persons. Strategic guidance from the General Assembly would be required, alongside bold new social protection initiatives in order to step up implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the next five years.

21. The High-level Event on the MDGs held at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September 2008 had reaffirmed that gender equality and women's empowerment were critical in order to achieve those goals. Challenges included ensuring that at least as many girls as boys completed their education; preventing the deaths of women in childbirth; and strengthening women's economic, social and political emancipation. The Secretary-General had launched a campaign to unite to end violence against women and girls. That campaign would rely on the input of all Member States, and in particular of the Committee.

22. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the reports of the Secretary-General under consideration under agenda items 55 (a), (c) and (e). The report in document A/63/133 provided an overview of the deliberations held on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" and issues pertaining to social groups during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. It examined the emerging issues of social protection, youth employment and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. It made a series of recommendations regarding the promotion of employment and decent work; investment in education, training and skills development; and addressing violence in the work environment.

23. Document A/63/95 summarized the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing completed in 2008. Significant progress had been made on the relevant issues; however, obstacles remained, largely as a result of limited national capacity. The report also provided an outline of the strategic implementation framework requested by the General Assembly in resolution 62/130, and stressed the need to link that framework to evidence-based policymaking at the national level.

24. Document A/63/183 consisted of a review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report focused on

the emergence of a new normative and policy architecture, the process of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the emergence of regional action plans and programmes, and the expanded constituencies for the advancement of persons with disabilities.

25. **Ms. Pansieri** (Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteer Programme), introducing the report on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 (A/63/184), said that it was the third such report submitted by the Secretary-General and drew on feedback from Member States, international agencies and other stakeholders, giving a consolidated outline of progress thus far. It stressed that volunteering was embedded in almost every culture, albeit in different ways and it pointed to four areas in which progress had been achieved. The report concluded with a series of recommendations, which included the need for adaptability to country situations; focusing on the role of the private sector, the research community and young people; and addressing environmental considerations. It also considered ways to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and to heighten awareness of their contribution to the work of the United Nations.

26. She noted that there was growing concern about the feasibility of attaining many of the MDGs. Although volunteering alone was not enough, its often unrecognized impact could be channelled to support collective action. The adoption of a General Assembly resolution would help guide and inspire the organizations around the world that made use of volunteers. Lastly, she was grateful to the Governments of Brazil and Japan, which had taken initiatives to facilitate dialogue on the topic.

27. **Mr. Richmond** (Director, Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introduced the report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/63/172), which had been prepared by UNESCO in accordance with its mandated role as coordinating agency for the Decade. The report was the outcome of a wide-ranging consultation undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/140. It found that literacy was not progressing rapidly enough to meet the MDGs or the Education for All (EFA) goals, and that marginal groups and women and girls continued to be a particular concern. The report singled out three priorities for the second half of the Decade: greater commitment to literacy among all partners, greater capacity to deliver high-quality literacy programmes, and new resources both from national budgets and through international aid.

28. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) asked about the views of the United Nations on how to address and limit the impact of the food, energy and financial crises. He wondered what approaches would be taken to ensure that social development goals were not affected, or whether, given the crises, goals would be reset.

29. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) requested elaboration on the role of the private sector in working with volunteers.

30. **Mr. Ballestero** (Costa Rica) said that, while it appeared that the view of the Secretariat was that the rights to education, employment and full participation in society for people with disabilities arose solely from the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in fact the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities made specific reference to cultural, social and economic rights. For that reason, the Convention should become universal.

31. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba), following up on the question put by the representative of Malaysia, asked whether the Secretariat had assessed or planned to assess the impact of the current crises on the achievement of social development goals, especially with regard to the commitment to full employment. Historically, the goals had emphasized economic development rather than social support. He wondered whether that approach would continue to hold sway. Referring to the comments by Mr. Richmond regarding the use of new information technologies in literacy programmes, he noted that most illiterate adults had little or no access to information technology and asked whether more accessible technologies such as television and radio would be used.

32. **Ms. Taracena Secaira** (Guatemala) said that the literacy programme described by Mr. Richmond primarily targeted large countries, but that there were small countries, such as hers, which not only had extremely high illiteracy rates but also had ethnic and cultural issues which complicated the task of spreading literacy. She asked what approaches were being taken in the case of small countries with high illiteracy rates.

33. **Mr. Olukanni** (Nigeria) asked whether, in view of the recent economic turmoil, development dates and goals would have to be changed, and what impact the crises would have on the African development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

34. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) asked whether a preliminary assessment of the impact of the crises on social development and the Millennium Development Goals would be available before the forty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development in early 2009, as, absent such an assessment, discussion would take place in a void. In addition, she requested further information on UNESCO programmes aimed at improving the quality of education in developing countries.

35. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the questions posed by several Member States, said that it was clear that the crises were having an impact on the most disadvantaged groups. No assessment by United Nations agencies had yet been carried out. The financial system must support equitable, sustained economic growth, with more effective regulation, counter-cyclical institutions and risk monitoring. Social policy must be more universal.

36. There would be discussions in the Commission for Social Development on the implications of the crises for Africa. In reference to the question posed by the representative of Costa Rica, she said that cultural, economic and social rights were indeed enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In answer to the question posed by the representative of Guatemala, she stressed that literacy programmes in countries with indigenous populations must be culturally relevant so that children were not "pushed out" of the education system.

37. **Ms. Pansieri** (Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteer Programme), responding to the request from the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, stressed the importance of private-public cooperation in the area of volunteerism, stating that the private sector had a major role to play. Senior-level professionals had a strong desire to contribute to social development, and volunteering provided such an opportunity. The Teach India campaign, organized by *The Times of India*, a privately-owned newspaper, had placed over 100,000 graduates as teachers in underserved schools, providing the graduates with professional experience and the schools with much-needed trained staff. Another benefit of voluntarism was that it could be carried out over the Internet, enabling people with disabilities to participate in society.

38. **Mr. Richmond** (Director, Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said, in response to the question from the representative of Cuba, that the context of literacy was constantly changing and that digital opportunities should be taken advantage of. At the same time, it was necessary to adapt to conditions and use more accessible media, such as television and radio. Face-to-face contact was also an important component of voluntarism. Responding to the concerns expressed by the representative of Guatemala, he said that attempts were being made to develop local-scale, culturally appropriate programmes in local and indigenous languages.

39. In reply to the question posed by the representative of Egypt, he stated that many children left school with inadequate preparation due to overcrowded classrooms, a lack of resources and poorly trained teachers. One goal was to stop the flow of illiterate graduates and, in that connection, the World Bank and UNESCO supported Governments that worked to improve curricula and teacher training. Overall improvements were needed in education, not just in the teaching of particular skills, and education must be culturally relevant. Children fared better in school when their parents or siblings were literate.

40. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) noted that according to paragraph 73 of document A/63/183, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on disability had in 2008 initiated activities related to war and conflict situations and persons with disabilities. However, the findings and recommendations made no reference to the situation of disabled persons in war and armed conflict, including foreign occupation. She therefore wished to know of any proposals or ideas addressing the issue from the standpoint of global development cooperation.

41. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that she would have to consult with colleagues before responding to the

question posed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the current financial, food, climate and energy crises were contributing to a worsening of economic and social conditions, especially for the most vulnerable members of society. The impact of those crises on the United Nations social agenda must be evaluated in the context of the important work to implement the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

43. The significance of employment creation and decent work for poverty eradication and social integration had been highlighted at the World Summit and twenty-fourth special session, at the July 2006 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and in the Millennium Declaration in the context of realization of the Millennium Development Goals. She therefore stressed the need for an integrated approach to full employment and decent work based on such criteria as equity, equality, security and dignity.

44. She welcomed the continued focus on women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, whose contributions were essential for social stability, economic growth and poverty eradication, and also the emphasis in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133) on the need for investment in education, training and skills development and noted with interest the proposals related to the development of national action plans on youth employment. Employment generation in general must be at the centre of macroeconomic policy and national development and poverty reduction strategies, and she agreed that the goals of full employment and decent work could not be separated from the need for a more enabling international economic environment based on fair trade practices and sound financial systems that supported development.

45. An enabling environment for enterprise development must be created in both rural and urban areas, including the promotion of micro, small and medium enterprises. The increase in food prices had highlighted the need to strengthen agricultural development in the developing countries, but she stressed that increased production must be accompanied by increased access to credit and markets.

46. Major conferences and summits over the preceding two decades had helped identify the major social and economic challenges facing the international community. Implementation of the related resolutions had however become increasingly complicated on a practical level, and there seemed to be less political will to cooperate with a view to ensuring their implementation. Enhanced international cooperation and partnership was crucial to efforts to translate the promises of the past twenty years, for example the Millennium Development Goals, and in particular goal 8, to develop a global partnership for development, into concrete action.

47. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Liechtenstein, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the World Summit on Social Development and subsequent related international conferences had reaffirmed the importance of social development and the promotion of well-being for all and mobilized the international community for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

48. Thirteen years after the World Summit, however, much remained to be done. The follow-up to the World Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly provided a framework for social development goals. Those goals must be implemented in the context of poverty eradication efforts with a view to promoting full employment and increased social integration. Social issues must likewise be integrated into national economic policies in order to ensure that human and social challenges were taken into account in the globalization process.

49. To that end, the European Union promoted economic, social and cultural rights and international labour standards, in particular by strengthening its cooperation with the developing countries and promoting decent work as a positive factor for development. It believed that a social contract for the twenty-first century was more necessary than ever and remained committed to implementing all internationally agreed social development goals.

50. An ageing population constituted a challenge for governments and societies, and too many older persons were excluded from the social system and marginalized, in both rich and developing countries. National social policies must include measures to promote the well-being and dignity of older persons by guaranteeing them secure and decent living conditions, free of need. Their basic needs must likewise be met, and they should have easy access to health care. The European Union for example devoted particular attention to the situation of very old women, who were particularly vulnerable to material insecurity and poverty. Nevertheless, nearly ten years after the declaration of the International Year of Older Persons much remained to be done to assist the elderly in their daily lives. The international community must make a greater collaborative effort to address the precarious situation of the elderly and implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

51. The United Nations International Youth Year in 1985, the special sessions of the General Assembly in 1985 and 1995 and the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond had influenced youth-related policies in many countries. Given that the one fifth of the current population of the world was between 15 and 24 years old, it was more important than ever to implement the World Programme of Action at the national level. Education, an internationally recognized fundamental right, was the key to economic and social development, equality, dignity and lasting peace. He therefore welcomed the political and financial commitments made at the recent high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the commitment to providing $4.5 billion for the Education for All programme.

52. The declaration of the United Nations Literacy Decade in 2003 had underscored the importance of literacy in the context of achieving of the goal of education for all. The European Union supported international efforts to increase literacy, in particular for women and marginalized groups, and acknowledged the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to lead the campaign for literacy and education for all. More than 75 million children nevertheless still did not have access to education, and 774 million adults and young people could not read or write. That was unacceptable and the Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade must be continued with a view to achieving the shared objective of literacy for all.

53. Approximately 10 per cent of the world population, or 650 million persons, suffered from some sort of disability, aggravated by discrimination of various types. The disabled continued to be marginalized despite relevant international human rights instruments. Accordingly the international community had explicitly recognized their rights in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which reaffirmed rights already recognized under international law, stipulated what those rights meant for the disabled and clearly recalled the universal, indivisible, interdependent and indissociable nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The rapid entry into force of the Convention was encouraging and attested to the international community's awareness of the situation of the disabled. The effectiveness of the Convention would however depend on full implementation of its provisions.

54. **Mr. Maema** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), stressed that internationally agreed development goals could only be realized through a continued focus on the special needs of the most vulnerable countries. In that context, he noted the importance of the recent high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and high-level meeting on Africa's development needs and the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

55. The global food and energy crises continued to have a negative effect on the international socio-economic situation and on the poor and vulnerable in particular. Accordingly, in April 2008 the SADC heads of State and Government had established a ministerial task force on food security to address the current crisis in the region and respond to such factors as weather, energy prices, reductions in world food stocks, the use of crops in biofuel production, which increased food consumption in developing countries commodity speculation and inadequate investment in agriculture. The task force had recommended that SADC countries should increase investment in agriculture and improve access to agricultural inputs by providing temporary subsidies to small farmers. It had also called on international donors and partners to honour their aid commitments to developing countries. He urged the

international community to assist SADC in tackling the challenges that it faced.

56. The World Summit for Social Development had reiterated the importance of full and productive employment for poverty reduction and development and he therefore noted with appreciation the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the high-level substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2006, which called for the development of a ten-year action plan to promote full and productive employment for all. Full and productive employment, including for women and young people, must be a central objective of national and international policies. SADC was committed to taking the necessary steps to implement that goal.

57. Poverty continued to be a scourge on humanity, and poverty eradication strategies must address its root causes and create an enabling environment for poverty eradication, equity and social development. Accordingly, in 2004 SADC had developed a regional indicative strategy development plan to create a conducive environment for economic growth and sustainable development and deepen integration within the region. Policies were being implemented to improve the lives of the poor, in particular in rural areas. Domestic and foreign resources were being mobilized for poverty eradication, and he called for increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment to that end. Notwithstanding progress made, poverty levels remained high, and the situation was aggravated by such health-related problems as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Increased access to low-cost or subsidized essential drugs and other life-saving interventions and the development of national capacities to produce generic medicines through technology transfer must be promoted.

58. He regretted that there had been only minimal progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Although older people, particularly in developing countries, bore the responsibility for caring for orphans and extended families due to the spread of HIV/AIDS, they were excluded from social development programmes. SADC remained committed to addressing the situation of older people by integrating them into poverty and development processes and allocating resources to that end. The international community must likewise take concerted action to implement the Madrid Plan of Action.

59. While progress had been made towards implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade, international support for literacy remained low. Globally more than one adult in five was illiterate, 75 million children did not attend school and millions of children dropped out every year before acquiring sufficient skills to be productive. Increased literacy played a key role in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. SADC remained committed to promoting universal access to quality education and the acquisition of skills needed for the knowledge-based economy and the health and social sectors as well as equal opportunity and sharing in the benefits of social development.

60. He welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and looked forward to its full implementation. International cooperation was essential to assist developing countries in that regard. He likewise noted with satisfaction the recommendations of the Inter-agency Support Group for the Convention as well as the work of the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development, in particular with regard to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

61. The Southern African Development Community continued to implement the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and related conferences. It reiterated its call for the developed countries to fulfil their commitments for official development assistance and debt relief, which were crucial for economic development.

62. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted the sobering assessment in the World Economic and Social Survey 2008 that global economic security was under threat while the Secretary-General had spoken of a developmental emergency. That situation had been exacerbated by climate change and the increase in the power and frequency of tropical storms in the Caribbean, such as the two hurricanes that had devastated Haiti. It was therefore necessary to avoid further suffering by promoting aggressive medium- and long-term solutions to meet human needs and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

63. She expressed support for the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/63/133) as well as the development priorities identified therein. She drew particular attention to the importance of reducing poverty and promoting social integration through the expansion of employment and job opportunities and to the need to make agricultural development a priority, especially given the impact of biofuels on the availability and cost of food. Also noteworthy were the recommendations to provide social protections to those in the informal economy and promote youth employment while likewise mainstreaming the concerns of older persons and the disabled into the development agenda.

64. She reiterated the continued relevance of General Assembly resolution 62/126 on policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy-promoting youth participation in social and economic development, and the Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond contained therein. She commended the organizers of International Youth Day in August on the theme of youth and climate change, which was particularly relevant to youth in the Caribbean, and also commended the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for its recommendations on the unique problems of indigenous children and youth.

65. At the regional level, she commended the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Sub-Regional Headquarters for the Caribbean for its December 2007 report on the situation of youth in selected Caribbean countries. In July 2008, the CARICOM heads of Government had endorsed a framework for guiding and coordinating the actions of Governments and development partners in addressing children's issues, including with regard to climate change and emergency situations. They had also commended the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and development partners for their continued support.

66. The Caribbean Community commended the regional commissions for their contributions to the review of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and welcomed the strategic implementation framework contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/95), looking forward to further dialogue on national and regional implementation. At the regional level she acknowledged the work of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters to identify demographic trends and the challenges that they posed for social protection and security, review national policies and analyse the situation of vulnerable groups, with a focus on the elderly.

67. In the context of the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she noted the report of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters on disability in the Caribbean, which provided a basis for a dialogue on that issue. With regard to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, she reiterated CARICOM support for national, regional and international efforts to strengthen the family, in particular family reunification, especially for migrant workers, who made significant contributions to the development of their host countries.

68. Despite limited resources, CARICOM member States continued to address the challenges of social development at the national level and through regional institutions. That was especially challenging for small States, and she noted that the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) maintained a social policy unit to integrate economic and social strategy, collect data and support and monitor development activities. CARICOM looked forward to the results of efforts by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in the period 2008-2009 to organize expert meetings on improving social statistics for measuring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and identifying critical areas in the provision of social and economic programmes, in particular for vulnerable populations.

69. At the wider regional level, the Community continued to tackle social development issues. The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against AIDS was proving to be an effective mechanism to coordinate the efforts of Governments and civil society. The 2007 CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases was another example of regional efforts to meet the health needs of the region. CARICOM heads of Government were also developing initiatives to deal with such issues as rising prices, energy, climate change and food and nutrition security, including support for agriculture. For the smaller member States, the heads of Government of the Eastern Caribbean, at their meeting in May 2008, had acknowledged the

critical need to increase food production and agreed to share experiences and practices to deal with the challenges facing the agriculture sector and mitigate their effects on the more vulnerable segments of the population.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.